

9 species against 8 on Penguin, which is ten times as large. The extinction rate for other plant categories lies between these extremes, the result of which is a steady change in composition of the flora, as well as its general impoverishment, as the islands diminish in area. For example, on Penguin Island sclerophytes comprise nearly half the indigenous flora; on Seal, Bird and Middle Shag their proportion is respectively 26, 17 and 7%.

Opportunity for exotic species to establish themselves likewise declines as the islands (and their number of niches) become smaller.

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### FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Children's Python Preying on Free-tailed Bat.**—On June 26, 1960, in a cave on Mt. Anderson, 70 miles south-east of Derby, I noticed a Children's Python (*Liasis childreni*) crawling along a rock ledge 20 ft. above the floor. Almost as soon as I saw the snake it struck at a Free-tailed Bat (*Taphazous georgianus*), secured a grip and coiled about it. The bat soon weakened and fell. The two creatures landed at my feet and when I picked them up the bat was dead. I carried them back to our camp a mile away and the snake did not release its hold until it was placed in a collecting bag. The snake measured 18 in. in length.

—PETER SLATER, Derby.

**White Ibis in the South-West.**—The White Ibis (*Thveskiornis aethiopia*) has made its appearance once more in the Murray District. In the irruption of 1952, when there was a large influx of the Straw-necked Ibis into this area, White Ibis were seen. This year beside the usual 30-50 resident Straw-necked Ibis there has been an influx of ibis presumably from the north but not so many as in 1952. In July 1961 Colin Paterson saw a White Ibis among 20-30 birds two miles north of Pinjarra. On August 9 Fred Grantham saw a White Ibis with black head and black tip to wing in a flock of 20-30 birds two miles west of Coolup. I have not heard of any other species which was noted in the southern irruption of 1952 (*W.A. Nat.*, 3: 177-196) having been seen this year.

—ANGUS ROBINSON, Coolup.

**Pheasants Feeding on Snails at Rottnest I.**—On October 9, 1960 a hen Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), a species introduced on Rottnest Island, struck a power line after a high speed take off and dropped dead. The crop seemed unduly swollen and hard. On examination I found it to be crammed with snails (*Theba pisana*).

This confirms the observation of Serventy and Storr (*W.A. Nat.*, 8 1959 : 196).

Pheasants also eat the dune snail, *Cochlicella acuta*. On March 30, 1961 I was brought a hen pheasant killed when it flew into a wire fence near the water catchment. Its crop was filled with the small shells of *Cochlicella*. Mr. George Dittmer, lighthouse keeper, told me that the crop of a hen pheasant killed recently when it flew into a wireless aerial was also crammed with dune snails.

—W. A. FARMER, Rottneest Island.

**Calls of the Boobook Owl (*Ninox novuseelandiae*).**—Two observations which I made on the Peel Estate in September-October 1936 may possibly throw some light upon the function of the calls described by Eric Lindgren (*W.A. Nat.*, 8 : 207) and by G. Storr (*W.A. Nat.*, 4 : 143).

Twice I tried to locate a calling bird and on each occasion a persistent "normal" call was modified to a rapid and sustained "cook-cook-cook", the usual measured "boo-book" being resumed after my withdrawal from the vicinity.

More recently, December 29, 1960, when my son Lindsay and I were camped in the Porongorups, the "book-book-book" call was heard followed by a muffled "boo-book" which developed into the characteristic call. In this case the bird *may* have been influenced by our proximity.

In the foregoing paragraphs I have followed the relevant field notes in rendering the call as "cook-cook" in one place and "book-book" in the other. This is not significant.

Twice in January 1951, at Wooroloo, we heard atypical calls. In the first instance two birds were calling and I recorded—rather vaguely—that the calls were "obviously *Ninox* but not typical being almost tri-syllabic", and a few days later my son saw and heard a Boobook Owl, "the call being quite distinct from that usually associated with the species." I saw the bird only.

From these records it would seem that there are at least two variants of the well-known "boo-book" call.

—ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Collie.

**Possible Predation by a Lycosid Spider on a Vertebrate.**—While collecting at Culham in September 1960 I turned over a stone and a small grey skink (possibly *Ablepharus* sp.) ran out. It was immediately seized by a spider (which was later identified by B. Y. Main as a juvenile *Lycosa*, possibly *L. leuekarti*).

The lizard as it struggled shed its tail. The spider then dropped its victim and pounced on the wriggling tail and the lizard made its escape into a pile of rocks.

This instance of possible predation adds to the list of spiders preying on vertebrates reported by Main and Butler (*W. Aust. Nat.*, 7, 1959: 52).

—P. McMILLAN, Guildford.